



OHA TRACKER



LAKE COUNTY/DUANE DUNGANNON

NOVEMBER 2015

Commission approves OHA proposals on lighted nocks, auction mountain goat tag

The Oregon Hunters Association in October presented two proposals for the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission to consider, and the Commission approved both: lighted nocks for bowhunting, and a mountain goat auction tag to raise funds for the state's mountain goat program.

The OHA lighted nock proposal was first brought forth last year, when OHA asked the Commission to reconsider the ban on the use of lighted nocks. OHA reported a membership survey showing overwhelming support for lighted nocks and noted the ruling by Pope and Young to approve lighted nocks as an accepted tool for the fair chase of wild game. OHA added that lighted nocks serve no other function than to help bowhunters see the point of impact and aid in the recovery of game.

Bowhunters will be able to use lighted nocks in Oregon's 2016 archery season.

In a letter sent to the Commission proposing the mountain goat auction tag, OHA outlined the need for the tag in addition to the current raffle tag:

"The Oregon Hunters Association and the Oregon Chapter of the Foundation for North American Wild Sheep request that the Commission approve an auction tag for mountain goats for the 2016 season, in addition to the current raffle tag.

According to ORS 497.112 (which OHA helped pass), both an auction and raffle tag are authorized by law, pending approval by the Commission. The statute requires money received from the two special tags be placed in a mountain goat subaccount to be used exclusively for mountain goat management.

Both OHA and Oregon FNAWS be-

lieve Oregon mountain goat herds have increased in numbers to the point that the additional tag is warranted. The 2014 Oregon population was estimated at 900 animals. In 2015, 21 tags were authorized for mountain goats in Oregon (a record high number).

ODFW has done an excellent job of restoring this native species to historic habitat, especially since the season was closed due to low numbers in the 1970s and 80s. As recently as 2000, only three tags were authorized.

We suggest that the facts indicate that an auction tag should be authorized."

The first mountain goat tag auction will take place at the OHA State Convention on May 21 at Seven Feathers Casino in Canyonville. OHA will donate its 10 percent share of the proceeds to ODFW's mountain goat program.

For information about bidding on the tag, call OHA at 541-772-7313.

Other Commission Action:

 A new Premium Hunt series will offer an opportunity to draw an additional deer, elk, or pronghorn tag with a longer season. These tags will be very limited but available in most areas. Tags will be allocated through the regular controlled hunt draw process but will not use preference points.

 2016 regulations will define "drones" and prohibit their use for activities related to hunting, trapping, and fishing. This follows a bill OHA helped pass in the 2015 Oregon Legislature.

 General archery elk hunters will be able to take either sex in Desolation and Minam units. Saddle Mountain, Scappoose and Wilson archery elk bag limit will go to bull-only for all hunters (including Disabled Permit holders).

 The Commission also discussed cougar target areas, where ODFW reduces the cougar population to reduce conflicts with livestock, public safety issues and impacts on ungulate populations (deer, elk, bighorn sheep). ODFW will begin

cougar target areas in the E. Umpqua and Interstate wildlife management units and continue target areas in Steens Mountain and Warner units in 2016. OHA's Umpqua Chapter helped initiate the new E. Umpqua target area.

Wolf delisting up for vote on Nov. 9

The Commission will vote on wolf delisting at its Nov. 9 meeting at ODFW Headquarters in Salem. OHA urges members to testify at this meeting. At the hearing in October, sportsmen were outnumbered 4-to-1 by those who testified to not delist, and we need a better showing in November.

At the October wolf informational meeting, ODFW staff reviewed modeled outcomes for three scenarios: delisting statewide, delisting in eastern Oregon, and no delisting. In all three scenarios, Oregon's wolf populations are projected to continue to grow and the likelihood of population failure was very low (less than 1 percent).

OHA urges members to testify at this meeting. 

About 50 people signed up to testify at the meeting. Commission Chairman Michael Finley recognized the emotional nature of opinions about wolves before opening public testimony. "We are not making our decision based on emotion, we are making it on facts," said Finley. "We have to follow the law and policy." He urged those interested in wolves and in testifying in November to review the biological status review and meeting presentation on ODFW's website and return comments with insight related to that information.

Regardless of any delisting decision, the Wolf Plan will continue to provide conservation and protection for wolves in Oregon, ODFW Wolf Program Coordinator Russ Morgan noted in his presentation.

OUTDOOR OUTLOOK

OCTOBER 28

Rocky Mountain elk first season opens

NOVEMBER 1

Rocky Mountain elk 1st season closes;
Daylight Saving ends

NOVEMBER 3

Election Day

NOVEMBER 6

Western deer rifle season closes

NOVEMBER 7

2nd Rocky Mountain elk season opens

NOVEMBER 7-8

Youth general rifle season western deer
hunt weekend

NOVEMBER 11

Western gray squirrel season closes in
Western & Central Oregon

NOVEMBER 14

Coast bull 1st season opens;
Late SW deer bow season opens

NOVEMBER 15

Rocky Mountain elk 2nd season ends

NOVEMBER 17

Coast bull first season closes

NOVEMBER 21

Late NW deer bow season opens;
Coast bull 2nd season opens;
OHA Bend Chapter youth bird hunt
541-480-7323

NOVEMBER 27

Coast bull 2nd season closes

NOVEMBER 30

Eastern Oregon bear season ends

DECEMBER 6

Late SW deer bow season ends

DECEMBER 13

Late NW deer bow season ends

DECEMBER 31

Seasons end for pheasant, fall turkey &
Western Oregon bear

JANUARY 1

2016 licenses required

OHA News & Views

Let Oregon's Wolf Plan Work; It's Time to Delist

By Jim Akenson
OHA Conservation Director

When I look at Google Earth, my first reaction is to zoom in and out for perspective. Greater perspective helps us gain a better view of wolves in Oregon, and how removing them from the state's threatened and endangered list will allow them to be managed as a species that has been successfully recovered.

A U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service report from April, 2009, states that there were already between 60,000 and 70,000 wolves in North America at that time, including an estimated 12,000 in Alberta and British Columbia, and at least 1,645 in the northern Rocky Mountains recovery area, which is recognized as a southern extension of the robust Canadian population. Zooming in tighter to Idaho, which was a node for Rocky Mountain recovery with 15 wolves reintroduced in 1995 and another 20 in 1996, we see that Idaho's wolf numbers tripled in just two years to 115, and reached 192 by 2000. As of late 2014, there existed a minimum pack count of 104 (with another 23 state border packs) and an estimated population of 770 wolves. This all follows six years of regulated hunting and trapping of wolves.

Idaho has been the source population, through dispersal, for wolf re-establishment in Oregon. The first Oregon pack to be confirmed was the Wenaha Pack, documented in 2009. Our state anticipated an inevitable wolf movement from Idaho, and by 2005 had produced and adopted a Wolf Management Plan. This three-phased approach called for evaluating an option for delisting once the criteria were met for Phase II. The criteria called for four breeding packs to successfully rear two or more pups for three successive years. By 2014, these criteria had been met and exceeded, as there were nine known successful breeding pairs of wolves in Oregon, including eight packs in northeast Oregon and one in the southern Cascade Mountains. In recent weeks, there have been three wolf activity areas identified in southern Oregon. The minimum population is

estimated at 81, not counting this year's pups (13 of the 16 documented pairs had litters this year).

Zoom out to include the entire northern Rocky Mountain region, and it's obvious that Oregon's wolves are well connected and thriving, and it's equally clear they are ready to be removed from Oregon's endangered species list.

We also need to look at how wolves have affected neighboring states to gain a clearer picture of what we can expect in the coming years. In Idaho's Unit 26, within the Middle Fork Zone of central Idaho, wolves were reintroduced in the mid-1990s. The elk population was 1,270 and hunter harvest in 2006 was 89 bull elk. By 2011, counts for Unit 26 were just 366 total elk and hunter harvest was a meager 24 bulls. Hunter numbers for the three units comprising the Middle Fork Zone dropped in half, going from 1,678 in 2006 to 821 in 2011.

The pattern here is crippling for the local rural economies, where hunters start their journeys to the backcountry. Wolf predation might not be the only factor influencing central Idaho elk numbers, but with a high wolf pack density in the Middle Fork Zone, it is the dominating factor according to the Idaho Department of Fish and Game.

Contrary to claims made by animal protectionist groups, delisting does not remove protections for wolves in Oregon. Wolves will remain a protected species, and they are still federally listed in all but the eastern-most sliver of Oregon. Delisting will, however, start the journey down the road to Phase III and allow the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife more options for applying management practices.

Following through on the promises made to Oregon's agricultural community will also foster better tolerance of wolves and maintain the credibility of Oregon's Wolf Plan.

We need to look more broadly on the issue of wolves and expand our focus to be able to see beyond state lines. Wolves have demonstrated the ability to look beyond state borders, and we should, too. Oregon developed a very effective management plan with detailed criteria to recover wolves in this state, while also protecting other wildlife species and agriculture. It is vital that we carefully follow the direction of the wolf plan, which was developed with buy-in from many diverse stakeholders. We must stick with the plan and delist wolves in Oregon. 

See this week's Hunting Headlines at www.oregonhunters.org